

*Leo Lassene*

HOUSING  
*and*  
COMMUNITY PLANNING

Chapter XII

Government Planning in Canada



DR. LEONARD MARSH  
(Research Adviser, Committee on Reconstruction, Ottawa)

1944

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# HOUSING

*and*

## COMMUNITY PLANNING

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# FOREWORD

**H**OUSING and community planning are expected to bring about increased employment, prosperity, slum clearance, improvement in health, solution of the traffic problem, or other advantages, depending upon the need which is most obvious. There is little agreement upon what is involved, or how housing can be effective, or what planning really means. What are the underlying economic problems in setting up a planning scheme? How is the social pattern affected by physical changes? What is the experience of others? What effect will our customs have upon any plans that we may make? What are our opportunities and our needs? These are the problems that this book attempts to discuss. It is a survey of ideas about physical planning that may be useful in preparing post-war plans, or in evaluating them. It endeavours to reveal some of the problems from different points of view.

The chapters were written as separate papers and given as lectures in a series under the title of "Housing and Community Planning, with Special Reference to Post-War Opportunities". The series was arranged by the School of Architecture and took place during the session of 1943-44 on Tuesday evenings in the Engineering Building. One hundred and forty were enrolled in the course, besides students from the Department of Sociology and the School of Architecture. The order of the lectures has been slightly altered in the book, as it seemed more appropriate to group the chapters into those which were general, those which dealt with our problems here in Quebec, and those which dealt specifically with Montreal.

Mr. Aime Cousineau, Colonel J.-E. Pinault, and Mr. Burroughs Pelletier deserve our thanks for their assistance upon the organizing committee of the course, and also Dr. Benjamin H. Higgins for his part and for the suggestions that he gave us based upon his experience of planning in the United States. We are particularly grateful for the enthusiastic support of Mr. Gordon Pitts, then President of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada and a Governor of the University, and to Colonel

Wilfrid Bovey, Director of the Extension Department, for his assistance in the organization and administration of the course, and for being chairman at so many of the meetings.

We would also like to thank all the anonymous members of the University staff who in addition to their regular work have contributed freely so much of their time to the success of the course.

Finally, we wish to express our appreciation for the help and encouragement of the Government of the Province of Quebec, without whose assistance this book might not have been possible.

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# Government Planning in Canada



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The title of the subject which was given me is "Government Planning in Canada" but it will be more correct if you understand it as "The Role of Government in Relation to Housing and Community Planning". I am not able to do more than outline what I think government in Canada can and should do. I am not here as a spokesman of the Dominion government, to tell you what the Dominion is actually going to do. Postwar housing and town planning policy, so far as I am aware, has not yet been determined, either in principle or detail.

Housing and Community Planning—or town planning, as the latter is still commonly known—is unquestionably one of the major fields of postwar domestic policy, but you must remember that even that important subject is only one of many, all of which have to be acted upon if we are to have postwar plans worth the name. Housing and town planning projects all across Canada will be needed to fit into these, on various counts: because of all our present deficiencies in these fields; as employment projects; as part of the necessary fiscal measures in a "full employment" policy; and because better living conditions, urban and rural, and cities and towns we can be proud of, ought to be part of our vision of the postwar world.

Another important preliminary that needs to be made clear is the difference between *planning* and *plans*. This applies not only to town planning but to other fields of economic policy as well. The terms are on everybody's tongue today, along with "democracy", "full employment", and others which are freely used but seldom defined. Planning is certainly a necessity to meet postwar tasks. But it is more than drafting a plan—a chart or a blueprint—once and for all. There is a difference between mere plans—especially if they are not based on some industrious preliminary measurement—and the practical, continuous procedures of putting them into operation.

In town planning it happens that a carefully coordinated map of the projected territory is an integral part of the job. Even here, however, and certainly in other parts of the post-war picture, we need not only initial outlines and projections, but acceptance of the necessity of comprehensive and long-range *planning*. Planning means getting into working order a rational organization to meet certain defined ends. It happens that this is better known and accepted for "town planning" than almost any other field of economic policy. It will be useful, how-

ever, to remember that it applies to other matters of post-war reconstruction and that it is really shorthand for several important components. Planning involves at least four things. First, an *objective*; we have to know what we are trying to do. Second, it requires *data*; we have to define and analyze the existing situation, find out where we are and where we are going already. It is essentially, in the third place, a problem of *cooperation*, between the various interests and groups concerned. Town planning, as we shall see, requires not only action at all three levels of Canadian government, but participation and representation so that the action is taken democratically. Nobody in the community—least of all the great mass of wageearners in our cities and towns—can afford to be disinterested in urban planning.

Finally, it involves the *techniques* of planning—preliminary surveys, the formulation of an integrated program, methods of administration, control, and finance. Obviously, a great many things have to be done concurrently. That is the nature of good planning. They can be done badly — uninformed, individualistically, trial-and-error fashion—or they can be done well. We shall never be well housed nor make the most of our urban or our rural resources until we learn this lesson.

Confining ourselves now to housing and related policy, there are two ways of approaching it. The old-fashioned though still prevalent one is as a limited matter of doing something for the poorer groups in the community and of removing eyesores by rebuilding the slums and blighted areas of the city. The other way, which is now coming into its own, is to see housing as part of the great task of mobilizing human resources to achieve high standards of living and the best possible environment. Not that we do not need slum clearance, or to reduce and eliminate the overcrowding of human beings and deterioration of property which is growing year by year as the war goes on. We must place these things in their right perspective—good housing as part of the social minimum, construction projects as part of a full employment program, slum clearance and town planning as part of the great task of urban redevelopment. All of these have welfare aspects, but they are sound economic policies in their own right too. This I trust will be made clear in subsequent lectures which deal not only negatively with the wastes and costs of blighted areas, but positively with the effect of a long-range housing program as a stabilizer of employment and the national income. Everyone, not merely the slum dweller, has an interest in housing in this sense.

#### *The nature of town planning.*

The first essential is an understanding of the ordinary process of growth of the modern urban community. First it must be emphasized that town planning is not merely an æsthetic matter—of more parks or landscaping, or a few handsome buildings—nor a matter of arterial roads and better traffic arteries. Nor, even as I have already mentioned, a matter of slum clearance, or the elimination of deteriorated or unsightly areas. It is not purely physical at all, but economic in

origin. Most of our cities have grown without any provision for that growth in advance; without any endeavour to make a rational pattern of industry, residence, recreational facilities and so forth, without any attempt to measure what proportions of these facilities are required for a particular population. The pattern of unregulated, haphazard growth has been repeated in city after city so that it is all too familiar to the town planners. For that matter, it is familiar to any observer who looks at a city as a whole—from its centre to its fringes, from waterfront and earliest location to the newer suburbs and still-remaining farm land on the outskirts.

The pattern is one of rings of growth, varying somewhat according to topographical features and history, but revealing a cycle of changing functions and migrant populations. The central areas increase their industrial and commercial usages, invade the property which was once residential. The residents move out, leaving a ring of deterioration, but also of comparatively high land values held or bid up in the hope of profiting from the demand for commercial usage. Speculators, slum landlords, the unwillingness of city assessors to recognize a change in the real or probable values, may all aggravate the problem. As many former residents as can move out to areas not yet built up where they can get more space and newer accommodation; builders, real estate developments, transportation improvements (street railways, roads, and automobiles in modern times) aid this process. In many old cities, and Montreal is an example, there may be more than one such "ring". The accidents of parks, university buildings or streetcar lines or dead-end streets may preserve some properties and amenities, destroy others. Other things which should not be accidents, such as factories or railway sidings, also have their influence.

In the outskirts or suburbs there may or may not be protection. Some areas, unplanned from the start, may lack facilities, build narrow streets or poor properties. Others establish themselves as model cities, but at the cost of high taxes or of being wealthy dormitory areas rather than communities with balanced economic and social facilities. The hardest battle which the town planner is still fighting is to convince the public and local governments alike of the advantages of the "neighbourhood community" which should be reasonably self-contained instead of a mere conglomeration of dwellings at the end of a car-line. It should have schools, libraries, parks, recreational facilities, but also (with reasonable protection and the encouragement of good building) industry and commerce,—places to work as well as live. Such an area may be more effectively located with reference to the country (and therefore, incidentally, to markets for farm produce); and better able to levy and collect its taxes. What we have instead are topheavy areas of all kinds, some poverty-stricken or insolvent, others tributary and overtaxed. This is why townplanners talk of a "master plan", for the metropolitan region as a whole. Before we can reorganize, even out some of the errors of the past, we must know the present pattern, and make at least a broad sketch of what we would prefer it to be.



This is the main picture. Some of the details are almost as important. If there are no plans, no guiding controls, even a desirable improvement in itself may make other matters worse. A new and modernized office building does not replan the district in which it is situated. If it happens to attract tenants from inferior accommodation within the area, the effect may be to deteriorate the value of the deserted properties. A new boulevard does not necessarily regenerate the district through which it passes: especially if it is not combined with slum clearance, replanning of the area, adjustment in taxes or assessments, it may merely expose the blight which was formerly built in, without providing any redress. Piecemeal traffic improvement may be nullified if "bottlenecks" are left untouched in other parts of the city: a high-speed road, street-car service or subway may be almost disastrous, by syphoning traffic and residential population away from the centre of the city and leaving intermediate zones abandoned, offering no incentives for improvement. Unless a pattern of land-use is established, for the city and its surrounding region as a whole, and measures taken to ensure that future development will conform to it, there is no guarantee that values and standards can be preserved in any particular area.

On the positive side, other examples could be cited to show that the concepts of modern town planning are much more elaborate than the popular—and vague—meanings frequently accorded to the term. The "green belt" or protective band of open space, farm land, and recreational area is a well-known one—though few if any large cities have it drawn, safe and sound, upon their zoning maps. The principle of the "neighbourhood unit" is much less familiar, though it is one of the most important for future housing or rehousing programs. New housing, whether it is low-rental housing for wage-earners or individual home-ownership housing, whether it is in the inner areas of a city or in the suburbs, should not be *merely* houses. Each sector of population or residential units should be planned as a community. It requires, according to its size, a proper quota of schools, libraries, recreational facilities, medical, welfare and other services. The role of commercial and industrial establishments should be integrated into the area—not a few retail stores, with factories frowned on as undesirable appendages or encroachments,—but part of a rational industrial decentralization, which electric power, new techniques and materials, and natural resources development plans should aid and encourage. The experience of the Industrial Estates in Britain should be drawn on in this connection. Given such a basis, it should be noted, there is no need for a rehousing area to be composed of persons of a single or limited income group; nor for its revenue to be solely derived from residential properties. A third development which is well worth mentioning is the vision—it is merely a vision, so far—of a broadly-conceived and thoroughly well planned market terminal. This should provide efficient access as well as adequate parking space for farm vehicles, protected and attractive booths for the display of merchandise, storage and refrigeration facilities, organized relationship to rail transportation, and to

other needs of farmers and of customers; and there is no reason why community halls, libraries, theatres, etc. should not be planned in relation to the marketing centre. Of course, there is need for the architect and the artist in all of these things. I should be the last to deny the importance of landscaping, good taste, sound design, structural beauty. But the æsthetic features come—perhaps not entirely of themselves, but much more easily—if we apply, more resolutely than ever in the past, a community approach to the physical components, even to the statistics, and certainly to the economics, of urban redevelopment.

### *Two Fundamentals.*

How is town planning to be implemented as a postwar program? In a Canadian context, the answer has to be given in two steps. Certain fundamentals demand consideration first. The second concerns the roles of Dominion, provincial and municipal governments in the total procedure.

The first fundamental is the large-scale character of planning required for community re-building, and the necessity of appropriately bold measures to finance it. There is a great danger that we shall not visualize properly at the start the dimensions of town planning. In most of the bigger cities the areas in need of clearance, reorganization or rebuilding are large, particularly in the centre, and there are also substantial intermediate areas where part of the cycle of blight has had its effects. A small-scale or patchwork attack will not achieve very much, though it may cost a good deal in the aggregate. Planning on a worthwhile scale will be more economical in the long run; but since so much of the interior land is rated at high values, the problem is serious from the point of view of cost. It is probably important to reiterate that it is not enough to look at the problem in terms of slum clearance. This has long been a favourite phrase, but it can be a hampering one. Urban "blight" affects not residential areas alone, but commercial properties of many kinds: and it is not merely physical—the blight of deterioration, congestion, neglect—but economic—the burden of excessive taxes, outlived valuations, outmoded uses. Equally, the improvements which alone will justify themselves by radical increases in efficiency and amenity may involve acres of trackage, harbour installations, new traffic arteries, provision for open space, and so forth. In physical terms at least, Montreal has witnessed something of what is involved, in the change from the "hole in the ground" to the new C.N.R. terminal. Zoning regulations alone cannot be expected to bring about these vast transformations of the *status quo*. Accordingly, "urban redevelopment" rather than merely "slum clearance" or the "condemnation of insanitary properties" must be the modern town planner's credo. And the nub of this major operation is finance.

It will run to many millions of dollars to reorganize central city areas, acquire the properties involved, demolish, rebuild. Costs will be lighter, of course, in the newer or less built-up parts, or in new "reception areas" created on the outer margins; and also for the smaller towns. But hardly anywhere will the finances be forthcoming without

special organization for the purpose, (a) because of the sheer size of the ventures, (b) because there can be little or no prospect of immediate recoupment or profit, and there must almost certainly be losses in a few areas, and (c) because the ultimate results, which can be distinctly profitable, in either revenue or welfare terms, cannot be realized for a substantial period of years.

There are two possible types of such organization, which have received comparatively little discussion in Canada, though the subject is attaining greater prominence in the United States.<sup>1</sup> The first is that the Dominion government should organize urban reconstruction loans, that is, should offer Urban Reconstruction Bonds to provinces or municipalities at low rates of interest, with arrangements for repayment which would be gauged to the nature of the enterprise, being particularly light in requirements for the first few years, and extending repayment over a period of at least thirty years. It is quite probable, unfortunately, that easy terms may not be sufficient inducement. The general recommendation by some American economists is that no authority should have to undertake to recoup through repayment of the loan more than two-thirds of the total cost of acquiring all the land required, the problem in these areas being that the high land values are not justified and cannot be supported. Once the metropolitan centres are rebuilt so that they are thoroughly efficient, there is no doubt that their revenue situation will improve materially over the present; but in the initial stages there are some costs that simply have to be written off. In this country most people are likely to argue that there is only one governmental unit, namely, the Dominion government, which has resources and credit backing, sufficient to ensure that it will be achieved by financing which is really long-term and low-cost.

This may seem to some an unwarranted development of public investment. Actually, it meets the logic of modern urbanization and the facts of our past mistakes. As a recent American exposition has put it,

"... the contingency must be faced, that in the case of many individual parcels the cost incurred might be greater than the returns in dollars and cents from subsequent use of the land in accordance with the master plan, although probably the value of all the real estate in the metropolitan area would be enhanced by more than enough to compensate. Even so, in the long run, the federal government might be compelled to assume a considerable part of the burden of paying for the past errors of the cities and towns—e.g., for their inability to foresee and plan for the economic and social effects of the advent of the automobile and the airplane, for the bad judgment exercised by people and institutions in buying or lending money on land, and probably to

1. Cf. Guy Greer and Alvin H. Hansen: *Urban Redevelopment and Housing*, Washington, National Planning Association, December 1941. For an authoritative detailed presentation of the problem, see *Public Land Acquisition*, (Part I, Rural, Part II, Urban), Washington, National Resources Planning Board, June 1940, and February 1941.

some extent for the results of greed and even crookedness on the part of individuals.

"Is it proper to ask the federal government to assume the financial responsibility that might be involved? If it were merely a matter of 'bailing out' an individual, a group of individuals, or even such institutions as life insurance companies and savings banks, it would be questionable to say the least. But more than half the population of the country is directly involved, and the welfare of the entire national economy is at stake. Under such conditions, there would appear to be no alternative to having the federal government shoulder whatever the burden may turn out to be, as the cost of a job of civic sanitation—of cleaning up the social and economic mess left by past generations, for which only society as a whole can be held mainly to blame."<sup>1</sup>

The advocates of this method assume, of course, that "the *quid pro quo* of federal financial aid will be the initiation by the urban community of a long-range program of replanning and rebuilding", and that arrangements will be made to secure that proceeds from the new development are properly earmarked towards repayment of the loan.

The second approach, or as some would put it, the other extreme, is to finance and operate the project through unaided private enterprise, probably in the form of an Urban Redevelopment Corporation whose bonds would be taken up by individuals and companies (which might include real estate concerns, utilities, financial institutions, etc.) Presumably the Corporation would operate on some kind of limited-dividend basis; it would constitute in the field of town planning something of a parallel to the limited-dividend housing company which is favoured in some quarters as a supplement or substitute for a municipal housing authority as the agency for building and operating low-rent housing. It is reasonable to expect a good many industries and interests to see the case for reorganization and re-development of areas which in the long run will become a revenue proposition. A well-planned district in a city is a valuable asset, and it may be evolved from something which has been previously a source of loss. It is feasible to present it as a profitable investment if improvement can be tackled on a sufficiently large scale. The question is whether the obstacle already referred to will loom too large.

Between these two methods a compromise procedure is possible, by which Reconstruction Loans from the government would be made available to a Redevelopment Corporation combining both public (presumably municipal) and private interests. Since so much is at stake in any urban redevelopment which is more than simply a slum clearance or rehousing project, the assurance of local government participation has much to recommend it. Whatever is done, however, it is important that

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1. *Op. cit.*, pp. 6-7. For Canadian conditions, "more than half" (a reference to the principal urban areas of metropolitan character) should be changed to "at least a third". More than half would be correct if the statement were applicable to all urban population in the Dominion (which is now more than 55 per cent urban) but this is questionable.

the plan of the redesign and new utilization of the area should be made available for public examination and explanation before the project is proceeded with.

The second fundamental is the matter of legal power, to condemn, value, and acquire land. Local authorities must have such powers, and—what is more important in the first instance—the powers must be defined with specific reference to the ends they are designed to serve. In most provinces, cities and towns already have powers of a general and overriding nature to acquire land needed for public purposes, but valuations put upon the land, if they are not regarded as satisfactory by the owner, must go through a process of arbitration. Are we prepared to set limits to such values for slum or blighted properties—particularly where a valuation unjustified by present uses is adhered to, or may be enhanced only by the subsequent development of the land which a replanning project involves? Britain has had a substantial experience in this field, and the principle has been more or less accepted that for slum clearance purposes certain minimum valuations may be compulsorily placed on the sites. There may, of course, be very considerable difference between slum clearance for simple rehousing on the one hand and major urban redevelopment on the other, and in some cases, particularly in the outer areas or smaller towns, no serious problem may arise. It is important to note, however, that there are plenty of American (and potentially, Canadian) examples of areas where rehousing is needed but in which land costs are too high: if the legislation itself sets a maximum to the cost of land, as low-rent housing legislation in the United States does, some of the worst spots of built-up but deteriorated and overcrowded territory in the cities become virtually untouchable on this account.

When the problem of land acquisition has to be faced on a really vast scale, as it now has in Britain since the blitz, the question of powers of acquisition, principles and levels of compensation, and the control over future land use, become primary and vital. The meticulous and difficult work which was undertaken by the Uthwatt Committee,<sup>1</sup> the drastic nature of its major proposals, and the controversy which still rages around the non-acceptance of them, so far, by the British government, bear full witness to this. While Canada has none of these enormous war-town areas to complicate our postwar program, many of our wartime industrial and military developments, as well as our untouched backlog of urban replanning and rehousing needs, make the problem one of great dimensions. It would be foolish indeed to minimize the obstacle which to be overcome. The possibilities of opposition and delay, much of it from a variety of small interests, and from ignorance or suspicion of the advantages of redevelopment as

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1. *Expert Committee on Compensation and Betterment* (Mr. Justice Uthwatt, Chairman), Interim and Final Reports, April 1941 and September 1942, H.M. Stationery Office, London. A summary of the principal recommendations of interest to Canada is included as an Appendix in the Report of the Subcommittee on Housing and Community Planning (Advisory Committee on Reconstruction), King's Printer, Ottawa, 1944.

much as from real calculations of gain and loss, must be frankly met. We cannot have new and well-planned "city areas of the future" or housing conditions of which we shall be proud, without land. And if the land is not ready sufficiently in advance—which means soon—there will be no adequate program to provide employment and construction expenditures during the postwar gaps.

The other branch of the answer to our question concerns the administrative action necessary to put force behind a town planning program. This takes us back to the emphasis made at the outset, that planning is a *continuous* operation; and because this is Canada, it is called for at all three levels of government. The Dominion, the provinces, the municipalities—each has a role which cannot be effectively supplanted by the other; and, equally, the greatest amount of intelligence and enthusiasm manifested at one level alone will not suffice by itself if there is inertia or lack of understanding at the other key-spots—at least if a nation-wide program is our objective.

To take first the Dominion government, the prime need which it can serve is education, encouragement, and detailed assistance in explaining the techniques of town planning. As I have tried to emphasize, "town planning" is on everybody's lips; but expert knowledge of how it is done—not merely as an architectural or survey job, but as a functioning administrative organization—is seriously limited. There is a great fund of practical experience to be drawn on, if we wish, from Great Britain, some European countries, and the United States. Potentially, there is available a great deal of statistical and other material, from such sources as the Housing Census and the records of municipal finance, dealing with the economics of present urban areas, which are as important as the town planner's maps. But this cannot be adequately assembled, still less organized for effective Canadian use, unless some full-time personnel are established for this purpose. Educational information is needed on the principles of town planning, which will expound simply but soundly not merely the uglinesses but also the inefficiencies and costs of the present lack of planning; and positively, the implication of these principles for industry and commerce, real estate, traffic and transportation, for housing, welfare services and amenities, for democratic community living, for municipal finance, and several other branches of the subject, so that its *extensiveness* as well as its importance should get the recognition it demands. The logical next step is the preparation of a comprehensive series of manuals of procedure, covering all the stages of development of a master plan; and probably extended to suggestions on the form of provincial enabling legislation, charters for urban redevelopment agencies, and so forth.

These functions are clearly large enough to justify the setting up of a Town Planning Agency or Bureau within one of the appropriate Departments. Preferably it should be coordinated with the Housing Administration, or it might be one of the sections of such an administration if this were reorganized and enlarged, but it would be necessary for it to have a reasonable degree of working autonomy if it is to



succeed in its pioneering type of work. If it is a subordinate or undernourished unit, it could be rapidly reduced to assisting the piecemeal planning around the immediate sites of housing schemes, or even pious advocacy of general town planning with little hope of making headway against departmental preoccupation with getting houses built. Obviously, on the other hand, the Town Planning Bureau cannot succeed unless it develops cooperative relations with the Housing Administration, and with many departments of government.<sup>1</sup> These include, incidentally, not only departments such as Public Works and Transport, but also Agriculture, and Mines and Resources, because the line between urban and rural planning cannot be arbitrarily drawn, either on local or regional projects.

Specialists in town planning methods are so scarce that there is much to be said for the proposal that the Bureau should retain one or more to give field service, i.e., to act as advisers to provinces or municipalities, on request, to assist them in building up their own resources, staffs and plans. These Dominion representatives naturally could assist directly and materially in making known to local areas the material prepared by the federal Bureau. Since citizen interest in the whole subject is important, there would be a place also for a properly-equipped publicity section.

There can be little doubt of the value which such a clearing-house of *expertise* on town planning could have, in giving leadership, stimulating current progress, and spreading available experience to better effect across the country. If a policy of Dominion loans for urban redevelopment were adopted, the Bureau could have important fiscal functions too, for it would presumably advise on the adequacy or otherwise of the plans for a given area seeking eligibility for these loans. Whether the case for federal financial participation will be accepted remains to be seen, however. If initiative in this respect were left to provincial, municipal or private agencies, there would still be need—perhaps even greater need—for advice on techniques and procedures. This is a new field for Canada, however: and there are probably a few hardy souls who will maintain there is no place for a Dominion Town Planning Agency at all, and that everything in this field should be completely “left to the provinces”. The results in terms of delay and inertia and unequal development for most parts of Canada would not be confined to town planning, but would apply to housing and many varieties of public works projects as well.

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1. My own preference would be for a revised Housing Administration which would have at least five divisions: Town Planning, Assisted Financing (home-ownership), Low-Rent Housing (including a section on estate management and welfare organization), Farm Housing, and Home Improvement. It would seem to me desirable also to equip the Town Planning division with a well-chosen Advisory Committee which would include not only architectural and engineering representation, but at least one economist familiar with Canadian municipal finance. The Farm division similarly would require an advisory committee, because of the special and varied aspects of farm housing. But these details need not be pursued here.

*Provincial Governments and Town Planning.*

Most people would agree without hesitation, however, that provincial action is essential if satisfactory town planning is to be undertaken—though there may be a few who think that it is a matter which cities can or should handle for themselves; or, from a different angle, that the Dominion government might provide encouragement and assistance without involving the provinces at all. What is not sufficiently realized is the wide range of action which is in fact required if sound and vigorous town planning is to become an operative reality in Canada.

This is true not because of mere constitutional factors. Dominion-provincial and inter-provincial cooperation is necessary in Canada because of the sheer size of the country, and because regional decentralization makes sense in the face of our geographical characteristics—though this is a very different thing from a narrow, self-regarding or legalistic provincialism. Nor does the need for the interest of provincial governments arise simply because municipal and city charters are created by provincial authority. Extensions and improvements of existing powers are required, both in municipal and provincial areas of reference, and these will not be forthcoming without a live understanding of the nature and purpose of town planning; the legislation must be positive and directive, not merely negative or permissive in conception. It is not too much to say that a new spirit must infuse the legislators and their electors.

First, provincial town planning acts must be revised to take account of the pressing needs for urban reconstruction and the planned preservation and development of rural resources, and of the methods of achieving them. In all the principal urban areas the preparation of basic plans must be no longer optional, but mandatory. In Britain it has been compulsory for a number of years, and progress is now being considerably accelerated in readiness for postwar building; but the existence of a specific Ministry of Town and Country Planning, and the corpus of directions it is framing for the counties and local authorities throughout Britain, is evidence of the work still to be done. Progress will not be attained in Canada either, unless provincial legislation sets out in substantial detail the organization and procedures which are required.

Provincial authority is needed, in the second place, because town planning both in its "paper" techniques and its economic and social implications, extends far beyond the boundaries of most municipalities. In the metropolitan areas notoriously, a regional rather than a municipal or even city approach is needed. Even the finest kind of planning and administration within the main unit may be nullified if there is no corresponding development in the suburban and adjacent rural areas. Inter-municipal collaboration can be encouraged by provincial interest and coordination may require provincial legislation. The proper zoning and regional development of rural resources is even more clearly dependent on provincial action. Much of this is of direct concern for urban



amenities or salutary growth in the future. The protection of "green belts" and the preservation of recreation areas and natural beauty spots, are important examples; but this may well require regulation to prevent the acquisition and subdivision of rural land for speculative building on the one hand, and afforestation, river and stream development, and elimination of submarginal farming on the other. Again there are many parts of Canada where urban or partially urban units are too poor in resources or too remote to undertake town planning on their own, so that the requisite powers are not likely to be exercised unless the province, with the consent of the urban or rural municipalities, acts on their behalf. It is important to add that the charters of municipal housing authorities, for low-rent housing projects, will require provincial sanction, whatever the extent to which the form of such charters may be set by federal legislation or drawn up under the advice of the Dominion Housing Administration. In the case of rural or village housing, and of such amenities as community centres or rural electrification, the value of provincial participation is even more apparent.

The third reason for provincial action is as much to the point as provision for the financing of land acquisition is in the task of town planning as a whole. It is questionable whether the comprehensive types of reorganization and future development of urban areas which are called for can be contemplated, at least by the larger cities, unless revisions of the municipal tax system can be undertaken in the near future. It is true that most municipalities today are in a stronger budgetary position than they have been for many years. The existence of a surplus or of considerable debt reduction, however, does not eliminate the burdens of distorted land valuations, tax-delinquent areas, or a tax system related to capital assessment instead of the revenue-producing capacity of properties. Besides reforms of the assessment system itself another avenue of improvement which has to be considered is the redistribution of the cost of certain services (such as education, which also raises the question of larger-scale organizational units) between province and municipality.

Finally, none of these developments will be rapidly or successfully achieved without educational work and the provision of advice and technical assistance. Some types of such assistance may proceed more easily or appropriately from provincial sources (particularly Departments of Municipal Affairs): certainly in view of the scarcity of technical personnel already referred to, and the amount of work that waits to be done in Canada, there is room for a profitable division of labour between the senior governments in this whole enterprise.

#### *Cities and Municipal Governments.*

Whether town planning remains a phrase or becomes a reality depends on local government, above all the principal cities of Canada. That much is self-evident. It is the exact way in which local town planning is effected that is not sufficiently understood.

There are three stages or branches of administration which must be distinguished. The vital one is the "master plan" itself. The master plan is not something constructed out of the air but a coordination, evolved from the careful consideration and projection of a series of detailed studies—comprising not merely maps, but statistics of all the social and economic aspects of the community, the computation of desirable relationships of property, facilities and services to population density, estimates of probable growth, and the desirable land-use pattern at certain target dates. It is not confined, therefore, to streets and traffic, but includes (a) definition of existing residential areas and the required neighbourhood units of the future, along with the transportation, educational, welfare and recreational facilities necessary to serve them; (b) zone allocations covering all other forms of land use (including provision for new industry, amenities, population expansion, etc.); (c) building regulations, existing and required standards of property maintenance, etc., and, finally (d) the designation of areas where land, acquisition is needed, for demolition, revision of present use, reserves for protection against unplanned development, sites for new housing, and so forth.

To produce this plan requires a new kind of organization within the structure of city government. It is not a matter which can simply be left to the city engineer, or the city surveyor; it is even questionable whether these officers—potentially important though they may be—can play any effective part in the production of a master plan unless they are given a specific mandate, and authority to ensure the cooperation of all other city departments. In any case, however, because so many citizen interests are involved in a plan which will determine the future pattern of all the development within the area, and because some of the particular interests may conflict with each other or with the public interest, experience favours the setting up of an independent Board of Commission. This should be composed of responsible citizens each of whom may have acquaintance with the need for physical or economic planning in certain fields but is able to take a general view of the whole.<sup>1</sup> Somewhere in the future, of course, there must be a town planning expert per se. He may be retained for a given period or as a periodic consultant; he may or may not be a member of the city staff. His job is to work closely with the Board: to educate it on some matters, on others to secure its advice—particularly on the characteristics or problems peculiar to the city's population and environment. It is the Town Planning Board which must ultimately take responsibility for the final plan which they transmit to the city government, if it is to gain the confidence of the public generally. It must, of course, be voted on by the city council before it can become law, and it is practically essential that the plan and all its components should be placed on exhibition as soon as it has received the Town Planning Board's approval.

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1. The Board might include in its membership the officers in the city's staff most acquainted with town planning techniques; it might also include an alderman or city councillor. But these variables would depend on the city's resources.

A master plan could, of course, be produced by a town planning specialist or an architect alone, if he is given sufficient time and facilities. For a small town, this is probably the most expeditious method; and the steps necessary to secure its adoption both by the municipal administration and the citizens of the community are much simpler. For the large city or metropolitan region, however, the task is incomparably greater. The intricacies of the situation will not be met without the threefold approach of a reconstituted Planning Department to provide a nuclear working staff, a Planning Board or Commission to undertake an independent analysis of the elements of the plan, and the sanction of the City Council (or Councils) and citizenry generally. It would be no more reasonable to expect the master plan to be drawn up by the City Councillors themselves than to expect, shall we say, members of Parliament to draft the details of the Budget. But they have every reason to initiate one, to make themselves familiar with all its features when it is submitted, and to give support to its translation into practice once it has been approved.

The final stage of the local plan is administration, including enforcement of the regulations. As already emphasized, by-laws, zoning provisions and all the rest of the technical paraphernalia become significant and effective *only* when there is a logical pattern and a predetermined trend on which they can be based. This pattern will stabilize the real estate values which are appropriate for particular kinds of land use; it should eliminate altogether many areas of speculation which might otherwise survive; it will be strongest of all if the city acquires (or if it already owns scattered lots), consolidates substantial areas in strategic locations, and reserves in districts not yet built up. A considerable part of the town plan, however, will remain to be effected through ordinances. On these, a fresh start after a complete review of all zoning regulations, building by-laws, and—it is devoutly to be hoped—assessment levels and procedures, is the most straightforward method: though the immediate purpose should be to free certain defined areas for clearance, redevelopment, and new housing communities. The first steps are the hardest; but we can be quite confident that their demonstrative effect will more than justify the effort.

### *Conclusions.*

I think I have made it clear that town planning—perhaps better said, the achievement of planned and satisfying cities—is difficult. That is salutary, if so. Realization of both the basic principles and the many-sided nature of the task is not sufficiently part of our national—and local—consciousness. It is not enough to look around at drab streets, traffic congestion, slums and billboards and say: “Wouldn’t it be lovely if we had nice boulevards and new buildings and parks and decent housing for the poor!”—though even that is progress, so frequent is the lack of any reaction at all to the meanness, inefficiency and downright ugliness of parts of the city through which we pass day after day. Perhaps we harden ourselves to it unconsciously, in self-defence! What

has to replace this, however, is understanding of the particular things that have to be done to eliminate it.

Public information and discussion is therefore a keynote. Exhibits are very helpful. Doubtless a good many of you in this audience remember the excellent one which was prepared by the Architectural Research Group of Montreal. The only difficulty about that kind is that it presents the contrast between the good and the bad (the unplanned), without much indication of how to bridge the gap. The exhibition of the master plan just completed for Toronto goes a good deal further because it shows in detail how such a plan is built up. There is still need for much more—including descriptive booklets, films, and courses like the present one. The most important implication of all, however, is that urban and rural planning at all levels of government must strive for democratic participation at the administrative stages. This means effective demonstration of the wastes and evils of lack of planning at present—in terms of tax revenues, property values, accident rates, health and mortality conditions, school facilities, and so forth. It means presenting the case for reform to all the groups concerned—not merely property owners and electors, but citizens as residents and as wage earners, the utilities and transport concerns, industrialists, real estate agencies, welfare and recreational associations. The need for action on financing and land acquisition and new housing on neighbourhood-unit principles will then be as clear and accepted, as let us say, the need for combatting inflation (and making it a weapon for postwar stability) is today.

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